



HANDHELDS

FAQ

Q I know that portable media players can play various types of video file, but how can I put a DVD film on my media player?

A Getting a DVD film on to a portable media player is tricky for two main reasons. First, commercial DVDs are copy protected. Second, DVDs don't contain just a single video file; instead, the DVD's video and audio content is split up into several different files, which have the extensions .VOB and .IFO.

There are many programs available that can break the content scrambling system (CSS) encryption that protects most DVDs, but these exist in a legal grey area. We'll assume that you want to put a DVD that has no copy protection on to your media player.

Some media players support VOB files, in which case you can drop them directly on to the hard disk. However, as most films are split into several sections, you will have to play each section individually, which breaks up the film. A neater way is to encode the entire film into a single video file in a format your player supports.

Several programs can take the pain out of this process. InterVideo DVDCopy 4 Platinum can convert DVD files to a variety of formats, including DivX, WMV and MP4 for playback on a Sony PlayStation Portable. It also enables you to copy just the DVD's main feature without menus and extras, and it automatically combines the multiple files on a DVD into a single video file.

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REVIEW PORTABLE MEDIA PLAYER

ARCHOS
AV700

RATING ★★

PRICE £349 inc VAT

SUPPLIER www.blokesstuff.comDETAILS www.archos.com

Portable media players (PMPs) are designed to hold all your digital music, videos and photos and play them back through the built-in screen and speakers or an external display. Some, such as iRiver's PMC-120, run Microsoft's Portable Media Center, but the Archos AV700 has its own software.

The AV700 is the biggest media player we have seen. It's far too big for a pocket, but will fit in the side pocket of a bag. The size is mainly due to the 7" widescreen LCD, which is twice the size of the screens in most media players.

The screen is nowhere near as good as that of the Sony PSP or PQ1 Mpack P800, due to its low 480x234-pixel resolution. Images look blocky, and while this is less noticeable during video playback, horizontal lines appear across the display. The built-in speakers are reasonable, with plenty of volume.

The player's icon-driven user interface is confusing at first because of its strange button layout. The directional keypad on the left navigates through the main menus, but three buttons on the right of the screen control audio and video settings. There is no separate volume control, so turning the sound down quickly is fiddly.

The AV700 supports audio files in MP3 and Windows Media Audio (WMA) format, and DivX and Windows Media Video (WMV) files. It works well as an audio player, and you can browse tracks by artist, album, title and genre. Video support is less impressive. Dragging and dropping WMV files on to the player is a haphazard technique, as it is fussy about the kind of WMVs it accepts. Windows



Media Player 10 converts video to the correct format automatically, but the quality is very poor.

We had better results with DivX files. The AV700 played all our test videos, and films encoded to DivX were blocky but watchable. Converting a DVD to DivX format is complicated and takes a long time, so you're better off buying a portable DVD player for watching films on the move.

The player comes with AV input and output cables and a TV docking station with remote control, so setting it up as a media player and video recorder is simple. Video recorded in real time is reasonably good quality, but compression artefacts are obvious when playing media on a full-size TV.

Archos's AV700 is like a solution looking for a problem. Putting DVDs on to the device is painful and, even if you already have a collection of DivX films, the screen's low-resolution spoils their quality. Audio is fine, but the AV700 is far too big, heavy and expensive to use just for playing music.

Chris Finnamore

✓ Good audio quality

✗ Low-resolution screen; mediocre video support

SPECIFICATIONS Portable media player, 7" 480x234 LCD, 40GB hard disk, AV in/out, remote control, USB2 interface, 590g weight, 107x209x19mm (HDW). **Part code** AV700 40GB

HOTLIST PDA

PALM
LifeDrive

RATING ★★★★★

PRICE £268 inc VAT

SUPPLIER www.amazon.co.ukDETAILS www.palm.com

Palm's LifeDrive is a Palm OS-based PDA with an integrated 4GB hard disk. It has all the usual Palm organiser functions, but can also be used as an audio and video player, or simply for storage.

The PDA doesn't come with headphones, but audio playback is impressive. The LifeDrive is good value for a combined PDA and audio player.



SPECIFICATIONS Multimedia PDA, Palm OS 5.4, 416MHz Intel XScale processor, 4GB disk space, Bluetooth, 802.11b wireless networking, SD card slot

HOTLIST SMARTPHONE

ORANGE
SPV C500

RATING ★★★★★

PRICE From free to £50 inc VAT depending on contract

SUPPLIER Orange 0500 802080

DETAILS www.orange.co.uk

The C500 is the smallest smartphone on the market and has an excellent 2.1" colour screen, Bluetooth, micro SD card slot and 64MB of memory. Windows Mobile 2003 Second Edition is a vast improvement over its predecessor. If you want to stay organised on the move, this smartphone is easily the best one for the job.



SPECIFICATIONS Windows Mobile 2003 Second Edition, 64MB memory, tri-band phone, colour screen, 640x480 camera. **Part code** C500

HOTLIST SMARTPHONE

PALM
Treo 650

RATING ★★★★★

PRICE £400 SIM-free; £100-£260 w/contract

SUPPLIER www.amazon.co.uk (SIM-free);www.orange.co.uk (contract)DETAILS www.palm.com

The Treo 650 replaces Palm's previous smartphone, the Treo 600. It runs the latest version of Palm OS and has a much-improved, higher-resolution screen. The normal Graffiti handwriting recognition system is replaced by a QWERTY keyboard under the screen, which is easy to use. It also works well as a phone despite its chunky size. It's expensive SIM-free, but better value with a mobile phone contract.



SPECIFICATIONS Smartphone, Palm OS 5.4.5, 312MHz Intel PXA270 processor, 23MB RAM, VGA camera, Bluetooth, infrared, GPRS, SD card slot. **Part code** 1040EU



REVIEW MOBILE PHONE

SONY ERICSSON W800

RATING ★★★★★

PRICE £317 SIM-free; from £30-£150 with contract

SUPPLIER www.onedaymobile.com (SIM-free);

Orange/Vodafone/O2/T-Mobile (contract)

DETAILS www.sonyericsson.co.uk

The W800 is part of Sony Ericsson's Walkman-branded range. The phone is similar to the K750, but it comes with a more sophisticated MP3 player and a 512MB Memory Stick Duo for storing music.

The handset's design is almost identical to the K750's, but with a different camera shutter and two-tone cream and orange colouring. To use the 2-megapixel camera on the back of the phone, you hold the handset on its side and use the shutter button on the top. The keypad has a neat layout, with large buttons that operate the menus and a central joystick to navigate the phone's functions. The joystick's action is quite vague, though, and the keypad buttons are too stiff for rapid texting.

The W800 has a superb screen. Its 176x200-pixel resolution is plenty for the LCD's size, and the menus and images are crisp and vibrant. Like all modern Sony Ericsson phones, the W800 has a user-friendly interface. Most common functions are accessed with a few clicks. Call quality is clear, and the claimed battery life of 540 minutes talk time translates to about three days' real-world use.

The W800 makes a very competent music player. Transferring music to the handset is easy using the supplied software and USB cable. You can encode music directly from CD to the phone at various bit rates, or copy MP3s from your PC. The phone supports ID3 tags, and you can browse your music by artist or individual tracks. Although the



phone appears as a drive in Windows, dragging music directly to the handset confuses the phone's software and causes serious errors, so it is vital to use the official software package.

Sound quality is excellent, as the supplied headphones produce great sound and little noise leakage. These use a proprietary connector but a supplied adaptor enables you to use a different set. The phone's built-in speaker is incredibly loud and clear.

The phone's camera is also impressive. It has a maximum 2-megapixel resolution, and images taken in bright light are good enough to print, with good colour balance and little noise. It can also take photos in dim or dark conditions thanks to the penetratingly bright LED above the lens.

Sony Ericsson's W800 is a small, stylish handset that works well as a normal phone. It is also the first mobile we've seen with music-playing software that doesn't seem like an afterthought; everything from the PC software to the music interface on the phone is well designed and easy to use. Take into account the excellent headphones and generous 512MB Memory Stick, and the W800 is unbeatable as a music phone.

Chris Finnamore

✓ Superb sound quality and interface

✗ Stiff keypad buttons; vague joystick

SPECIFICATIONS Music phone, tri-band, 400 hours standby, 540 minutes talk time, Bluetooth/IR connectivity, radio, 512MB Memory Stick Duo, 176x200 pixel display, 99g, 100x46x20.5mm (HWD). **Part code** W800

HOTLIST POCKET PC

ACER n50 Premium

RATING ★★★★★

PRICE £238 inc VAT

SUPPLIER www.dabs.comDETAILS www.acer.co.uk

Acer's n50 won a Best Buy award in our PDA Megatest (*Labs, Shopper* August 2005) with its powerful performance, stylish looks and low price. It has a brushed metal effect casing and simple, uncluttered design. Applications start up almost instantly. It has good battery life and infrared, Bluetooth and wireless networking built in, as well as a generous 124MB of user-available storage. Excellent value.



SPECIFICATIONS Intel PXA272 520MHz processor, 124.27MB RAM, SD card slot, Windows Mobile 2003 SE, weighs 150g. **Part code** CP.N500H.024

HOTLIST SMARTPHONE GPS KIT

NAVICORE Personal for Symbian Series 60

RATING ★★★★★

PRICE £175 inc VAT

SUPPLIER www.mobilefun.co.ukDETAILS www.navicoretech.com

Navicore's Personal is a GPS navigation system for the Symbian Series 60 operating system, as used by Nokia and Siemens smartphones. It consists of a Bluetooth GPS receiver and an RS MMC card containing the map program.

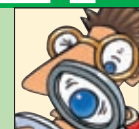
Planning a route is easy thanks to the logical software, and voice prompts are clear and accurate. It's not cheap, but it's the best GPS system for a series 60 phone.

SPECIFICATIONS GPS Navigation for Symbian Series 60 OS, SiRF III Bluetooth GPS receiver, UK maps. **Part code** 133-8432



CHOOSING A...

POCKET PC



Five points to remember when buying a Windows-based PDA

1 Pocket PC PDAs run Microsoft's version of Windows for mobile devices. The latest version of this is Windows Mobile 2003 for Pocket PC. The interface is not exactly like Windows on your desktop but there are similarities. All Pocket PC devices are touch-screen driven and support handwriting recognition. Microsoft specifies a colour display and resolution of 240x320 pixels.

2 A Pocket PC's processor plays a large part in determining how it performs. Intel's XScale series of processors is currently popular among makers; other processor manufacturers include Samsung and Motorola. A top-of-the-range PDA should have a 520MHz or even 624MHz processor.

3 A Pocket PC's memory provides space for applications to load and storage when the device is turned off. ROM memory is non-volatile so its contents will still be there after a reset or battery failure. RAM memory is backed up by battery power and is where third-party applications and your files will be stored. Look out for features such as FileStore, which allow you to safely keep your important documents in the ROM of the device. The more RAM the better, if you'll be using third-party applications such as games.

4 Almost all Pocket PC PDAs provide a slot of some form, allowing you to add more storage capacity. The most common types are CompactFlash and Secure Digital (SD). Both formats allow you to add extra memory cheaply, and the expansion slots can also be used to add extra features such as Bluetooth or wireless network connectivity.

5 To connect your Pocket PC to the internet using a mobile phone, Bluetooth is a must. If you have a wireless LAN installed, look for 802.11b networking in your Pocket PC to allow wireless web browsing and access to networked files.

FILL IN YOUR SPECS HERE

(Recommended minimum in grey)

PROCESSOR: 266MHz Samsung

MEMORY: 32MB RAM, 32MB ROM

RESOLUTION: 240x320 pixels

EXPANSION: SD

OPERATING SYSTEM: Pocket PC 2002